

CONNECTIONS OF LANGUAGE, CULTURE, IMMERSION AND LANGUAGE  
ACQUISITION & THE PROJECT OF AN AMERICAN CULTURE CRASH COURSE

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## **Abstract**

Throughout my classes, I have studied the important role that language contributes to culture, and that culture has to language and that exposure and immersion are integral aspects of learning a language. I review literature and scholarly articles related to the interconnections between language, culture and language immersion. Additionally I review the theory and studies relative to teaching language learners and share the teaching suggestions I found throughout my research.

For my project I created an “American culture crash course” with a very simple design to help students and families to address the problem of culture shock as they first come to a new school and don’t have any experience with English. The crash course will be offered to every new immigrant student at the school. At the beginning of the school year the goal is to hold a presentation for all immigrant students and families. This course aims to help explain culture norms of the United States, share common customs, and proper greetings for each family to understand as they get settled in the new country.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

My name is Zander Selent. I am currently not teaching, but I recently submitted a teaching application to the Fort Mill District of South Carolina and am hoping to begin teaching ESL this fall at the elementary or high school levels. I graduated from UNCG in May of 2020 with an undergraduate degree in Spanish Education K-12 and decided to gain a master's degree in TESOL before starting to teach. During my undergraduate studies, I spent a semester abroad in Costa Rica. I stayed with four different host families, traveled throughout the country: Monteverde, Guanacaste, Manuel Antonio, and Heredia, and completed 80 hours of Spanish immersion course hours.

I began studying Spanish in eighth grade and fell in love with the language and culture from my very first exploratory class in middle school. In continuing with the subject all throughout high school, I combined my passion for learning the language and my desire to teach to create my college degree of Spanish Education. While at UNCG, the subject of ESL was brought to my attention, and I fell in love with the idea of teaching English as a Second Language. I have always been passionate about learning language and the process of language acquisition. By diving into both those topics throughout my time in the master's program at Greensboro College, I have found a topic I really love. I am excited to dive more deeply into this field for my thesis project.

The final project concepts that have inspired me are the interconnection of language, culture, identity and immersion. Throughout my time in this program, I have taken a variety of

courses that have taught me about the processes of language acquisition. I have learned the important role that language contributes to culture, and that culture has to language. Throughout my classes, I have learned that exposure and immersion are integral aspects of learning a language and I chose to dive into this aspect of language learning further through my research. Additionally, I have incorporated researched theory of teaching language and its intersection with a focus on the research that has been done in productive language acquisition cases.

With all of these elements being integral aspects of the language learning process, I have implemented the creation of an “American” culture crash course for new students and families as they come to the schools as a way of bridging the gap of culture shock. This course will be open to the students, parents and families of those entering the school. The crash course will be offered to every new immigrant student at the school. At the beginning of the school year the goal is to hold a PowerPoint presentation for all immigrant students and families and provide them opportunities to practice concepts that are reviewed throughout the presentation. This course aims to help explain culture norms of the United States, share common customs, and proper greetings for each family to understand as they get settled in the new country. By hosting this event the culture shock that is typically experienced should decrease with the goal being to help students and families understand more cultural norms as they enter our country, share some insight into important cultural aspects that they would need to be aware of, and to make them feel welcome and safe in the school environment.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

In this section, I review literature and scholarly articles related to the interconnections between language, culture and language immersion. I first begin by defining the words language, culture, and identity, acknowledging that they are all intertwined. It is important to begin with the meaning before diving into their importance and relativity of culture to language learning. After introducing the concepts, I explain the relationship of language, culture and immersion to language acquisition. Additionally, I bring attention to the impact of language immersion and how it affects language acquisition. Furthermore, I review the theory and studies relative to teaching language learners and share the teaching suggestions I found throughout my research.

### **Connection Between Language and Culture**

In talking about the intersection between language and culture, first must define both terms. Culture is traditionally defined as a “body of social, artistic, and intellectual traditions associated historically with a particular social or national group” (Sowden, 2007, as cited in Lestari, 2010 p. 2) Culture involves behaviors such as: “using language, gestures, customs, eating habits, family life, and education, while others perceive cultures as products, such as literature, music, dance, arts, crafts, and artifacts. sometimes, religions, beliefs, ideas, values, and institutions are also referred to as culture” (Yuen, 2011). Nabi (2016) defined culture as a “set of attitudes, beliefs, behavioral conventions, basic assumptions, and values that are shared by a group of people and that influence each member’s behavior and each member’s interpretations of

the meanings of other people's behavior" (p. 91). In Nabi's work, Hantrais (1989) puts forth the idea that "culture is the beliefs and practices governing the life of a society for which a particular language is the vehicle of expression" (p. 91). All these definitions share the common theme that culture is the beliefs, values, customs, and behaviors of a group.

Next, language is defined and connected to culture. Language can be defined as the "system of communication comprising codes and symbols which is used by humans to store, retrieve, organize, structure and communicate knowledge and experience" (Kim, 2003, p. 1). Furthermore, Kim described culture as the primary instrument in the expression, transmission, and adaptation of culture. Language expresses the values, beliefs and meanings which members of a given society share by virtue of their socialization into it. Simply put, language communicates culture, to interact with a language means to do so with the culture which is its reference point (Nabi, 2017). Therefore, learning a language is not only learning the alphabet, the meaning, the grammar rules and the arrangement of words, but it is also learning the behavior of the society and its cultural customs (Nabi, 2017).

In the sole definitions alone, can see that language is a root of culture. Communication is not only the use of symbols that "stand for" beliefs, feelings, identities, or events, it is also a way of bringing beliefs, feelings, and identities into the present contexts (Nabi, 2017). For example, Nabi (2017) explained that language not only includes verbal and written communication, but language can also be expressed through body language, tone, and expressions, which are all taught in the culture one resides. Nabi (2017) stated that "the most obvious form of paralanguage is body language, or Kinesics, which is the language of gestures, expressions, and postures" (p. 92). However, the meaning of words can also be altered by tone and character of voice. Nabi (2017) shared that "language is complexly intertwined with culture, they have evolved together,



influencing one another in the process, ultimately shaping what it means to be human” (p 92).

Without language, culture cannot be completely acquired, nor can it be effectible expressed and transmitted.

With that being said, communication can be given or received as means of verbal, non-verbal, written, or visual styles, all of which are a part of communicating language and cultural elements. Huang (2012) shared that “culture plays an immeasurable role in language use as it encompasses the way a language is structured and used. Culture not only changes people's values and habits, but also affects people's language and behavior" (p 5). Furthermore, they indicated that a language adapts to the current culture by the introduction of new vocabulary through "pop culture" and the development of slang words in the passage of time (Huang, 2012). This idea connects to the research shared in the work of Kim (2003) who argued that culture contains a transactional process through the explanation of the three dimensions to the self. Kim (2003) explained that the situated self encompasses aspects of the person as individuals continuously adapt to everyday living and to new settings. This in turn helps explain that as cultural aspects change, language will also change with it and alter the concepts of identity (Kim 2003).

In addition, because of the relationship between language and culture, one is able to form a personal idea of identity within their self. Identity can be defined as an individual’s concept of the self, as well as the individual’s interpretation of the social definition of the self, within his/her inner group and the larger society (Kim, 2003). Norton (1977, as cited in Kim, 2003) defined identity as, “how people understand their relationship to the outside world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future” (p. 410). Identity as a concept is linked to desire. The desire for recognition, affiliation, security, safety, and/or material acquisition (Kim, 2003). In fact, looking at language helps

define identity within a person as described in Kim's work "language has a central role in the analysis of an individual and the social world, and states that language is the place where the actual forms of social organization and its consequences are both defined and contested" (p 3). The language of an individual associates that person to a specific culture/ group, which gives a sense of belonging, safety, and relationships and grants ideas of identity.

### **Why Teach Culture Alongside Language**

Given the closely intertwined nature of culture and language, it is difficult to teach language without an acknowledgement of the cultural context in which it is used (Baker, 2012). McKay (2004, as cited in Lestari, 2010) shared four reasons to include culture in the English classroom: "(1) it can promote international understanding, (2) deepen an understanding of one's own culture, (3) facilitate students' visits to foreign countries, and (4) motivate students" (p. 4). The first reason why culture should be incorporated in the language lesson is that one's actions or utterances might be interpreted differently by people who come from different culture. That is why knowing other culture can help students understand other culture. Secondly, learning culture also helps students appreciate their own culture. This might happen because when they learn about other cultures they will see what similarities and differences that both cultures have that this will lead to them to their being students with broader insight. Learning culture will also make students get along with others more easily, equipping students with knowledge on culture of the language they are learning will enable them to communicate with others more easily without being afraid of making unnecessary misbehaviors or actions (Lestari, 2010). Through

language acquisition, students will gain an appreciation for culture, and a better understanding of the language.

While it is important to teach the language of English, teaching English should not only cover teaching the language elements and the language skills, for example, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, but it should also present the culture underlying the language (Lestari, 2010). In addition, exposure to the culture of the people who speak the language being learned also leads to increased understanding and tolerance. “For language learners, an awareness of the cultural facets of language makes it easier to comprehend topics and situations they encounter when reading or listening” (Zoredo, 2008, p. 22). Lestari (2010) argued that teachers should be willing to introduce English culture when teaching the language so that the students get the idea where, when, and how the linguistic patterns that they learn in the classroom is used in communication. When teachers are able to successfully introduce culture into their language teaching, students can implement it in communication more confidently, whether it is their first language or second.

When teaching a second language, it would be a disservice for students to leave out culture. A teacher’s task is to make the students aware of the cultural differences and help the students to become communicatively competent (Lestari, 2010). Kim shared this mindset as she explained that the benefits to second language acquisition mean that the learner gains rewards in personal value of cultural capitals which in turn adds to the learner’s personal identity; “the learning of a second language enables one to view life through another cultural lens” (Kim, 2003, p. 1). Brown (2001, as cited in Lestari, 2010) shared that “when someone successfully learns a language, they will also learn something of the culture of the speakers of that language” (p. 4). That means that when a teacher teaches a language, they should also teach the complex

system of cultural customs, values, and ways of thinking, feeling, and acting in that language (Lestari, 2010).

In teaching culture along with language functions, a teacher can instill cultural awareness in the classroom. Cultural awareness can be defined as a conscious understanding of the role culture plays in language learning and communication (in both first and foreign languages) (Baker, 2012). Baker (2012) states that “Cultural awareness grants an understanding of the relative nature of cultural norms and leads students to the ability to critically evaluate perspectives, practices and products in one’s own culture and other countries” (p. 65). Cultural awareness is the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be developed by the language learner, which can then be utilized in understanding specific cultures and in communicating across diverse cultures (Baker, 2012).

Many of the teaching approaches of cultural awareness agree on the importance of a systematic framework for teaching culture and language together, in which the relationship between them is explicitly explored with learners (Baker, 2012). Furthermore, they all share a goal to increase understanding of culture and language leading to successful intercultural communication (Baker, 2012). By teaching culture along with language in the classroom students will gain an awareness of the following: “1. Culture as a set of shared behaviors, beliefs, and values. 2. The role culture and context play in any interpretation of meaning. 3. Our own culturally induced behavior, values, and beliefs and the ability to articulate this. 4. Others’ culturally induced behavior, values, and beliefs and the ability to compare this with our own culturally induced behavior, values, and beliefs” (Baker, 2012, p. 66). When culture is explored in addition to learning a language, students gain cultural awareness not only for the new culture

they are studying, but also in the analysis of looking at their own cultures. All of which lead to a deeper understanding of the language itself (Baker, 2012).

### **Importance of Being Immersed in Language**

Bostwick (2006) stated that language immersion is “an approach to foreign language instruction in which the usual curricular activities are conducted in a foreign language” (p. 1).

Bostwick (2006) proceeded to explain that proper language immersion means that 50 percent or more of the second language is used in order to hold the title of immersion. Cummins (2000) stated that the most impactful aspect to immersion classrooms is teachers creating lessons where students are able to use the target language throughout their time in the classroom. This is what really separates immersion learning from a normal language class. Students need to be given at least 50 percent of their instruction in the target language and be allowed to really use and wrestle with the language (Bostwick, 2006).

Bostwick (2006) also shared the four goals of an immersion program:

1. To achieve competency in the foreign language (listening, speaking, reading, writing)
2. To acquire the same L1 language arts skills as students in regular schools
3. To master content area skills & concept
4. To gain a greater understanding and appreciation of other cultures (p. 5)

The positive outcomes of an immersion program are gaining foreign language skills, first language skills, content area, and cultural sensitivity. Fortune (2012) identified the benefits of an immersion experience to be academic achievement, language and literacy development in two or

more languages and cognitive skills gained by completing a language immersion education. The design of the program creates environments where the second language is the sole method for teaching the core subject content rather than teaching language separately. By doing so, the second language and literacy development showed to have higher success and language proficiency (Fortune, 2012). Immersion students demonstrate “nativelike” levels of language comprehension as well as gain fluency and confidence while using the second language from their immersion experience (Fortune, 2012).

Additionally, Eros (2010, as cited in Fortune, 2012) explained that immersion creates an “important relationship between phonological awareness and successful reading abilities. (p. 3)” Through the immersion in language, students are able to decode words and understand the letter-sound correspondence through the exploration and exposure of the second language. Students also become more balanced bilinguals throughout their language immersion experience. Fortune (2012) also touched on the different cognitive benefits that immersion gifts its students. Not only do language skills become more evident throughout their learning processes in the immersion program, but cognitive skills such as problem solving, attention skills, sensitivity to verbal and nonverbal cues, and the ability to learn other languages are all additional benefits to the immersion program, as well.

In addition to immersion programs specifically, one must not forget the opportunity of a studying abroad immersion experience for language acquisition. According to Lord (2010), immersion can also be referred to as “an intensive two-month summer study abroad program” (p 492). They described the extensive study of eight study abroad students from America who went to Mexico with the goal of learning Spanish. At the end of the study abroad immersion program both groups showed improvement in their pronunciation skills and other linguistic areas, as well.

Participants noted that they felt more confident, that they had improved their vocabulary production and that they thought that they were more fluent or could speak faster as a result of their time abroad. The article also argued that “conventional wisdom, academic and otherwise hold that study abroad is the best way to acquire a foreign language” (p 490). Immersion offers significant gains in fluency in second language acquisition.

### **Theory and Research**

The work done by Trueba (1994, as cited in Kim, 2003) found that there is a very close relationship between language, culture and cognition. It was stated that effective learning takes place when culture is recognized and used (Kim, 2003). This statement was supported through the research of the Chinese group Miao studying in a dominated Chinese Han institution. The study concluded that being in a Han Chinese environment actually grew the Miao student's pride in their own culture and grew motivation, self-esteem and affiliation with their own ethnic groups. Two other studies supported this concept. The first being by Suarez-Orozco (1995, as cited in Kim, 2003) researched Latino students in Mexico versus the US where the results of this study showed that the sense of powerlessness and discrimination suffered by the Latino immigrants in the USA could be attributed to the problem of low self-esteem and poor academic performance, and not the traditional culture of the Latinos (Kim, 2003). The second was the study of the Japanese in Japan and America. This study showed that even with prejudices against them, the Japanese were highly motivated, successful and that they have a strong desire for achievement. Cummins believes that the incorporation of students' language and culture into the school program helps to boost the students' self-concept and reinforce their own cultural identity

(Kim, 2003). Through these studies one can see the importance of language, culture and formations of identity.

One theorist to note is Krashen, who formed the five hypotheses of second language acquisition. Krashen & Terrel (1983) stated that it is important to promote enthusiastic and independent reading among students because there is a link between extensive reading and success in language learning. Language is acquired best when meaningful comprehensible input is received. Therefore, it is important to maximize the amount of comprehensible input in educational program such as combining interesting discussions, reading aloud, recreational listening, listening to tapes, and watching films (Krashen & Terrel, 1983). One of the suggestions noted by Prowse (2002, as cited in Lestari, 2012) is: “The advantages of using audio recordings of simplified novel to strengthen linguistic skills—such as better pronunciation, faster reading speed, and improved retention of vocabulary and grammatical structures—that enhances future readings” (p. 9). Independent reading, and audio recordings of reading are just one of his theories of how to effectively help language learners.

Another educational theorist that is important to mention is Vygotsky (1978), who focused on the fundamental role of social interaction. Vygotsky's (1978) theories stressed the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition, as he believed strongly that community plays a central role in the process of making meaning. Zoreda (2002) emphasized that

teachers must create affective and pedagogical support, including materials, experiences, peer interaction, and teacher-student interaction, through activities of increasing difficulty that systematically challenge a learner but are still achievable given his or her level of experience, which is called the “zone of proximal development (p 23).



As shared in the works of Kim (2003), Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) is "as important as it is instrumental in creating an awareness of the relationship between sociocultural and cognitive factors of learning as well as the collective and individual factors determining cognitive development" (p 4). Keeping this in mind, it is important to create activities that allow students to work together and practice the language with their peers. Social interaction and support are greatly impactful when learning a second language.

### **Conclusion of Research**

From birth, the child's life, opinions, and language are shaped by what it comes in contact with. One can see that learning a new language involves the learning of a new culture (Nabi, 2017). Language policy must be used to create awareness and understandings of cultural differences and written to incorporate the cultural values of those being taught (Nabi, 2017). Although it is important to learn the facts about a foreign culture, facts alone are not enough. The values and attitudes behind the facts are more important in gaining cultural understanding (Tran 2010). By teaching language and incorporating culture, students are able to gain cultural awareness and formations of identity within themselves. It is important to recognize the interconnection of the two concepts as both are crucial in language development and cultural understanding. Additionally the highlighted benefits of creating an immersion experience in the classroom where 50 percent or more of the target language is used (Cummins, 1998).

### **Chapter Three: Project Design**

In this section I aim to explain why it is important to offer a cultural crash course before international students enter the school year. The crash course will be offered to every new immigrant student at the school. At the beginning of the school year the goal is to hold a presentation for all immigrant and first-generation student and their families. This course aims to help explain culture norms of the United States, share common customs, and proper greetings for each family to understand as they get settled in the new country. By hosting this event the culture shock that is typically experienced should decrease, and students and families should gain more confidence and comfort in adapting to their new locations.

Furnham and Bochner (1986, as cited in Saylag, 2014) explained that

foreign students are confronted by several difficulties and problems while living in a foreign culture, such as language problems, accommodation difficulties, misunderstandings and loneliness since they cannot master the social conventions of the society and are unaware of the rules of social behavior that underline interpersonal conduct, which eventually give rise to culture shock (p.1).

Presbitero (2016) shared that research has shown that international students more often than not struggle with culture shock as they move to and live in a new country. Culture shock has been viewed as the process of initially adjusting to a new cultural environment (Pedersen, 1995).

Research has shown that culture shock can either minimize or prolong the adaptation period of an individual in his or her new cultural environment (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008), depending on the emotional, psychological and/or physical stresses and difficulties

associated with culture shock (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). For most people, culture shock is a strange event. It is a time of psychological upset, readjustment, stress, and demands that people process many powerful emotions, both positive and negative, perhaps for the first time in their lives. The adjustment process has an emotional, psychological, behavioral, cognitive impact on individuals (Pederson, 1995). The transition from one culture to another not only presents an unfamiliar set of variables and experiences but can also result in significant psychological stress and produce feelings of depression, anxiety and helplessness (Saylag, 2014).

When thinking about immigrant students, it is necessary to understand the stages of culture shock as they might experience them. Pedersen (1995) described seven stages of adjustment which are as follows: 1. Incubation state, 2. Crises resulting from normal daily activity, 3. Understanding the host culture, 4. Objective viewing of the host culture, 5. Reentry, 6. Reverse culture shock and 7. Readjustment to the home country (Pedersen, 1995 p. 2). The first stage, also known as the “honeymoon stage” is where newly arrived individuals experience the feelings and excitement of a tourist keeping their identity rooted in the “back home” setting. The second stage involves disintegration of any old and familiar cues and cause an individual to feel overwhelmed by the new set of requirements found in the new culture (Pedersen). During this stage an individual might experience self-blame, and feelings of inadequacy during times of difficulties. Pedersen argued the third stage involves a reintegration of new cues and abilities to function in the new culture. Typically during this stage feelings of anger and resentment toward the new culture arise. The fourth state continues the process of reintegration toward a gradual autonomy and increased ability to see the good and bad elements from both the old and new cultures. This stage balances perspectives of the previous home and the new host culture. The

fifth stage is where an individual is able to experience biculturalism; obtaining two different cultures in the same country (Pederson, 1999).

Baier (2005) explained that without the help of school counselors to address school expectations and differences in their perceptions and worldviews and to assist in preserving their cultural values and making cultural transitions, symptoms of culture shock may persist and negatively impact international students' and other newcomers' successful adjustment (Constantine & Gushue, 2003). Saylag (2014) supported this idea as they stated, "before entering a new cultural environment, it is very important for people to prepare as much beforehand as possible" (p 1).

The crash course that I have designed aims to help explain culture norms of the United States, share common customs and greetings for each family to understand as they get settle into the new country. By hosting this event, the culture shock that is typically experienced should decrease, and students and families should gain more confidence and comfort in adapting to their new locations. The goal is to help students and families better prepare for their processes of acculturation.

#### **Chapter Four: The Project**

With language, culture, identity and immersion being integral aspects of the language learning process, I have implemented the creation of an "American" culture crash course for new students and families as they come to the schools as a way of bridging the gap of culture shock. This course will be open to the students, parents and families of those entering the school. The opportunity takes the form of a PowerPoint picture presentation. The goal of this crash course is

to help students and families understand more cultural norms as they enter our country, share some insight into important cultural aspects that they would need to be aware of, and to make them feel welcome and safe in the school environment.

The PowerPoint presentation will cover topics of proper greetings, signs of respect, personal space, classroom etiquette, time management, leaving tips and holiday business hours. Each slide on the PowerPoint has a visual representation that will help the nonnative English speakers follow along. Additionally there are several videos to watch throughout the presentation that give more insight to the topics listed and provide further explanations for the circumstances covered. Although the presentation will be given in English the attendees will have aided time to practice using common phrases with their families throughout the presentation.

There are fifteen slides to present:

Slide 1 title slide: This slide contains the title of the presentation: “American Culture Crash Course” with a welcoming line for attendees, as well as picture of the American Flag.



Slide two: This slide serves as a table of context to highlight the topics that will be covered in the presentation: proper greetings, showing signs of respect, rules of personal space, classroom etiquette, importance of time management, when to leave tip money, and an explanation of holiday business hours.



Slide three: This slide gives an explanation of common greetings found in the United States. It starts off with an explanation of smiling as being a way to be polite and serves as a nonverbal cue of being friendly. It also addresses that meeting someone for the first time in the United States includes a handshake and introduction. This slide also covers when it is appropriate/inappropriate to hug and kiss someone in the “American culture.”

# GREETINGS

- Smiles are basic signals of politeness, a non-verbal way of being friendly.
- Most people shake hands firmly and briefly when they meet for the first time or in a formal situation.
- When people are good friends or family, they will sometimes hug each other to say hello, goodbye or thank you.
- Kissing as a greeting, however, is usually only done between relatives and close friends (on the cheek) or between lovers (on the lips).



Slide 4: This slide offers video explanations on the concept of shaking hands in an introduction in the United States. The first video link offers support in understanding all the different aspects that encompass shaking hands. This includes an explanation on standing up to shake hands, touching the web of your hand to the web of the person's hand you're shaking, signs of disrespect with a handshake, giving a firm grip, how long to shake hands with someone, making eye contact and smiling throughout an introduction, proper body language, and giving first and last names in the introduction. The second video clip shows a short visual representation of the process.

# LET'S WATCH

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4lBdlgNyKFI>

2:44

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0YCKKHk\\_xGc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0YCKKHk_xGc)

1:13



Slide five: This slide allows time for attendees to practice introducing themselves with one of their family members or someone in the room. Included on this slide are some common phrases to include through an introduction so that if they are unfamiliar with using English, the language support is provided. This allows participants to practice what they've just learned in a safe space to prepare them for real events that they will experience in the United States.

# TIME TO PRACTICE

- Select a family member to practice with
- Practice introducing yourself while shaking hands and maintaining eye contact
- 5 mins
  
- Common phrases:
  - Hello! My name is \_\_\_\_\_. It's nice to meet you!
  - Hi! My name is \_\_\_\_\_. How are you doing?



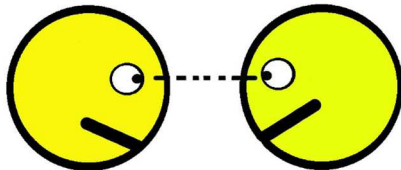



Slide six: This slide covers ways to show respect in the United States. One of the most common ways to show someone respect is to make full eye contact when talking to or acknowledging someone. This is also a way to signal to the speaker that you are giving them your full attention. Additionally, this slide covers how to address people when you are meeting them for the first time. In the United States it is common to use formal titles such as Mr., Ms., Mrs., Dr., or Professor until stated to do otherwise. This shows respect and formality in the “American culture” and is a polite way to address people until told to otherwise.

## RESPECT

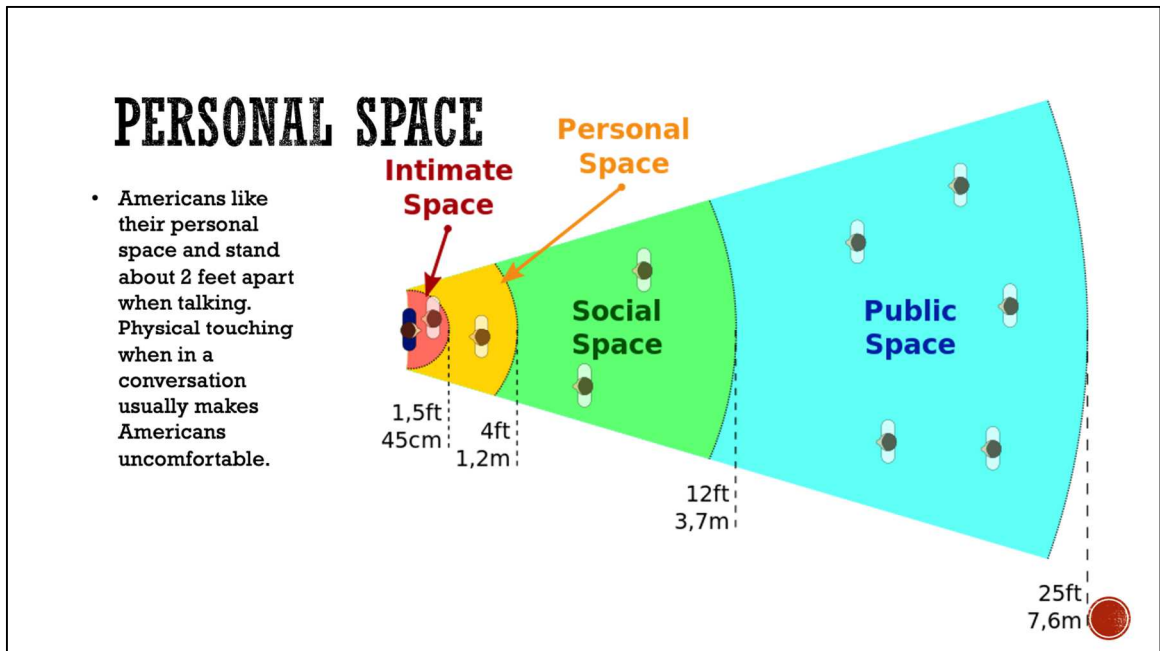
- Eye contact is mandatory when talking to someone. This is a sign of respect and shows that you're paying attention to the speaker
- It is good principle to address people by their title (Mr., Mrs., Ms., Dr., or Professor) and last name unless you are invited to do otherwise.

### Eye-Contact





Slide seven: This slide covers the topic of personal space in the United States. This is a big deal to Americans and can cause some awkward situations if it is not honored. The slide shows a visual representation of the four different levels of space: intimate space 1.5ft apart, personal space 4 ft apart, social space 12 ft apart, and public space being twenty-five ft apart. This slide also includes information about physical touch through conversations stating that it makes Americans uncomfortable.



Slide eight: This slide is a video representation and explanation of the different levels of personal space and social interactions in the United States. The video starts out with explaining the social principles of the United States. The first rule shared is to avoid physical contact such as touching, putting an arm around someone, holding hands, or kissing/ touching someone's face. The exception to the rule is a handshake upon introductions. Next the video describes the four levels of personal space and the instances when one might be in those zones. The video also shares to observe what other people are doing to imitate their levels of space.

# LET'S WATCH

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOfwegmhHKL&t=73s>
- 5:33



Slide nine: This slide covers information about correct classroom behavior and what to expect in the classroom. Some topics included are for students to raise their hand to talk, remain seated during class, the importance of participating in and attending class, and the common occurrence of needing permission in order to use the restroom.

## CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

- Most cases it is expected that students raise their hand to talk or ask questions
- Class discussion and participation are **HIGHLY** encouraged and may contribute to the overall grade.
- Students remain seated when the professor arrives or when the student's name is called.
- Attendance is expected and critical.
- One must ask to use the restroom in order to go





Slide ten: This slide allows time for students and families to practice asking to use the restroom during class, and how to find the restroom in new places. Included in this slide are common phrases they can use in order to ask, and gain information on where a bathroom is located.

## TIME TO PRACTICE

- Select a family member to practice with
- Practice asking to use the restroom during class, raise your hand
- Practice asking how to ask where the bathroom is
- 5 mins

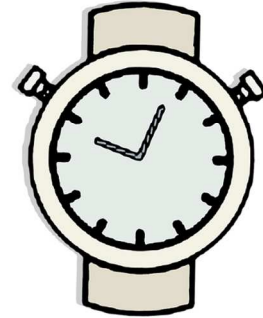
- Common phrases:
  - May I go to the restroom please?
  - Where is the closest bathroom?
  - Could you tell me where the restroom is please?



Slide eleven: This slide covers the important United States culture topic of time. In the United States time is extremely valued. It is important to show up to class, meetings and social gathering at the time stated. This slide shares the expression that “time is money” and that Americans “save and spend” time like money in a bank. This slide also covers the work/class week being Monday-Friday and that Saturdays and Sundays are set apart as the weekend.

# TIME MANAGEMENT

- Time is an American value. There is an expression that says, "Time is money". Americans "save" time and "spend" time like money in a bank.
- The work/class week in America runs Monday-Friday. Saturdays and Sundays are both set apart as the "weekend".
- It is important to show up to class, meetings, and social gatherings on time.



Slide twelve: This slide covers the confusing concept of when to leave a tip in the United States. It shares an explanation of the differences between counter service/ quick service (to go) and table service (sit down/restaurant experience). This slide also covers how much to tip: 15-20%+.

# WHEN TO LEAVE A TIP \$

- **Counter Service/ Quick Service (to go)**
  - This is when you order from you directly at the counter and pick up your food once you hear your name called
  - No gratuities are expected
- **Table service (sit down/ restaurant)**
  - You will wait to be seated at a table, order from a waiter or waitress, stay and eat
  - Must leave a tip, usually 15-20% of the total for your bill.



Slide thirteen: This slide includes a video explanation of all the different times one might be expected to tip in the United States. The video highlights waiters, bartenders, hairdressers, taxi/uber/lift drivers and spas as being the expected areas in which to tip 15-20% of the bill. It highlights the different levels of gratuity as well, for example: bad service=10% tip and \$0 tip is never acceptable after receiving a service. It also shares examples of when it can be confusing to leave a tip for example: a buffet restaurant, food delivery services, what to do with a tip jar situation, bell man, shuttle driver, takeout orders etc. The suggestion was to leave a 10% tip when prompted or feeling confused just to be on the safe side.

## LET'S WATCH

- When to tip and how much:
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yD7CAjt65kc>
- Start video at 4:56



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Slide fourteen: This slide shares the specific dates of the year to expect banks, offices and post offices to be closed due to holiday occurrences. This is an element to American culture that people should be aware of in order to plan accordingly.

# HOLIDAY BUSINESS HOURS

Banks are closed on federal holidays because the Federal Reserve, a government agency, is closed. If a holiday falls on a Sunday, the Federal Reserve is closed on Monday.

**Banks, Offices, Post offices closed these days of 2021:**

**New Year's Day** Friday, January 1

**Martin Luther King Jr. Day** Monday, January 18

**President's Day** Monday, February 15

**Memorial Day** Monday, May 31

**Independence Day** Monday, July 5 (Observed)

**Labor Day** Monday, September 6

**Columbus Day\*** Monday October 11

\*Federal Reserve Bank is closed, but American National Bank is open

**Veterans Day** Thursday, November 11

**Thanksgiving Day** Thursday, November 25

**Christmas Day** Saturday, December 25



Slide fifteen: This is the last slide of the presentation and allows a time where students and families can ask questions and voice any concerns that they want covered before starting the school year and settling in.

# QUESTIONS/ CONCERNS



These are a few of the most typical cultural norms of The United States that would be helpful in understanding as newcomers to help in the transition process for students and families.

By being introduced to these topics and cultural elements, the hope is that the period of culture shock will be lower, and that students and families will have an easier time in their transition after gaining knowledge of expectations in the United States.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusions**

Throughout my time in this program, I have taken a variety of courses that have taught me about the processes of language acquisition. I have learned the important role that language contributes to culture, and that culture has to language. Throughout my classes, I have also learned that exposure and immersion are integral aspects of learning a language. By exploring language, culture and immersion further through my research I understand more of their connection to acquisition and personal identity more than I had previously. To understand language, the culture must also be explored because one simply does not exist without the other.

Additionally throughout my research I gained an even more clear understanding of the adjustment periods that one can experience with immigration such as: the honeymoon stage, the crisis stage, the recovery stage and reaching the adjustment stage. I believe these are crucial elements to understand as an English Language Learner educator to support our students throughout their journeys of adjustment. In understanding the stages of culture shock one can better support students through their adjustments and offer additional help when needed.

After reviewing the interconnection between language, culture, immersion and language acquisition, I feel that the crash course I created could serve as a great introductory meeting for parents and families as they come into a new school and to the United States. The course serves the purpose of a simple introduction period where students and families could get a sense of what



to expect while being in the United States. By being exposed to a few cultural components of the “American way” students and families would have a greater sense of confidence as they adjusted to life in the United States. While the presentation is heavily aided with images, its design is simply to share some common cultural norms to be aware of as families adjust. This in turn aims to lessen the negative periods of culture shock that one might experience throughout their immigration process by having an upfront explanation of common cultural elements found in the United States.

In reflecting on the project itself, I think what I have created would best be used at the beginning of the school year or anytime a new student/family arrives to the school. This would be a great way to meet families and student's from the very beginning of their arrivals and could be a way to help them adjust at the very beginning and understand a few cultural norms that they might need help with. One improvement to the presentation would be to meet with translators from the school and provide pamphlets to students and families in their home language following the presentation. This would allow families to follow along with the information in their native language so that they could understand the material if they did not have English exposure prior to their arrival.

After reviewing the presentation I think I it would be beneficial to host another presentation a couple weeks later in the school year to help families in the everyday elements of living, for example: talking through how to schedule appointments at offices, find translators to accompany them on trips to the DMV or bank for example, and how to talk to teachers and faculty at the school. This presentation would be a longer duration of time and go into in-depth detail about the “how to’s” of everyday life and scenarios they might encounter to best prepare

the families. Additionally this meeting should include some resources to hand out to the parents/guardians like city maps or website information for what they would need most frequently.

With language, culture, and immersion being integral elements to language acquisition, my project design and research focus tie into my desired project of bridging the gaps of the culture shock experienced. My project, being a crash course into common cultural norms in the American culture with simple, visual, informative slides, can help aid people immigrating to the United States. The goal of offering a crash course into American culture at the beginning of student's and family's arrival is to lower the negative elements of culture shock one could experience through immigrating. This would help in their arrival and transitional stages of starting their new lives in the United States.

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